DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 777 HE 030 577

AUTHOR Boening, Carl H.; Miller, Michael T.
TITLE Research and Literature on the Sabbatical Leave: A Review.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; College Instruction; Educational Attitudes; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Literature Reviews; Program Descriptions; Program Effectiveness; *Sabbatical Leaves
IDENTIFIERS Faculty Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the literature on college faculty sabbatical leave and sabbatical leave programs often described as 'paid vacations' with no accountability. The literature indicates that sabbatical leave was an important part of any faculty development program. Those who took sabbatical leaves overwhelmingly reported the experience as a positive one. The literature firmly supports the contention that sabbaticals served as a mechanism for conducting research and to improve or develop teaching. However, the need for specific planning and evaluation of sabbatical leave was also indicated, as financial restraints and public awareness have brought increased scrutiny to professional development activities of this nature in higher education. Little mention was made in the literature of the effects of sabbatical leave on the service mission of higher education institutions, or of the internal benefit to institutional operations that sabbatical leave presents. (Contains 16 references.) (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 777

Research and Literature on the Sabbatical Leave:

A Review

Carl H. Boening, Ed.D.
Head of the Reserve Department
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Higher Education Administration Program
University Libraries
University of Alabama
Box 870266
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-2364

Dr. Michael T. Miller
Associate Professor
Higher Education Administration Program
University of Alabama
206 Wilson Hall
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
(205) 348-1170
FAX: (205) 348-2161
e-mail: mmiller@bamaed.ua.edu

Running Head: Sabbatical Literature

IR 020 577

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Carl H. Boening
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

Sabbatical leave programs have come under attack recently in the public, often being described as 'paid vacations' with no accountability. Somewhat surprisingly, little research into the programs has been conducted, and that which does exist, often takes the form of personal narratives, case studies, and broad descriptions of views on the sabbatical. The current synthesis was undertaken to bring together much of this literature, hoping to identify particular questions for consideration as future scholars and practitioners examine this type of leave program.

The data regarding sabbatical leaves are varied, much of it existing in the form of qualitative research. Personal narratives are the norm, as teachers relate their experiences while on sabbatical leave. Though most report the sabbatical leave as a positive measure, detractors warn of problems with public perceptions of such leaves.

Green (1994) related his story regarding sabbatical leave, and though Green was a public school teacher, his experiences related well to faculty at colleges and universities. Some of the reasons he chose to go on sabbatical included decreasing job satisfaction, the urge to seek better opportunities, and job burnout. The author suggested that school boards should give teachers a semester off every 10 years to allow for personal and professional renewal. Similarly, Dumser (1991) related her experiences while on sabbatical from her public school teaching duties. She used the release time to visit other classrooms throughout the United States and Canada to learn more about cooperative learning. The author concluded that the sabbatical promoted professional growth and rejuvenation, and was a valuable tool for both teacher and school district.

Financial problems surrounding sabbatical leave is not a new problem. Stickler (1958) examined sabbaticals at state universities and land grant colleges and found that even then sabbatical leave programs faced financial

difficulties. Some institutions were forced to cut back or eliminate sabbatical leaves as a form of faculty developed due to budgetary restrictions. However, the author also found that in spite of these problems most state universities and land grant colleges maintained high quality sabbatical leave programs that were an integral part of the institutional mission and would continue to do so in the future.

Sullivan (1972) turned the tables on traditional thought regarding sabbatical leave, and asked the question "Why not take a sabbatical to teach?" The author felt that a semester or year of actual classroom experience would help eliminate misconceptions and fears about teaching that many faculty have. Too often, faculty get so involved with research that they forget where their roots are, in the classroom. Past experiences in the classroom are not adequate to prepare faculty for the changing needs and nature of students. The author also felt that those faculty who espouse theories about education should be forced to go into the classroom to see just how they work in real life situations. If faculty believe their theories and ideas are sound, then they should be eager to test them in the classroom.

Bluhm (1976) called for closer evaluation of sabbatical leaves. The author reported that an effective sabbatical leave plan is essential to teaching and research, and that a

plan should meet both personal and institutional needs. In a survey of faculty and administrators at the University of Utah, the author found that faculty felt sabbaticals should not necessarily have to be taken away from the institution, should be longer than established limits, and under certain circumstances, the six-year rule should be waived. Administrators felt that the sabbaticals should be longer as well, but should be taken away from the school to enhance the sabbatical experience. Overall, the study was beneficial to both faculty and administration, as the sabbatical leave plan for the university was amended to make it more compatible with faculty and institutional needs.

Avakian (1987) examined the need for colleges and universities to expand innovative leave opportunities. At the University of Missouri prior to 1981, sabbatical were the only type of leave with pay granted to faculty. After a review of leave policies, new guidelines were established for leaves with pay and revisions were made to guidelines regarding the awarding of sabbatical leaves. The new guidelines included "research leaves," where tenure-track faculty could develop or renew skills, catch up on research, or reflect on personal career stages. "Development leaves" were made available to tenure-track faculty in order to allow them to broaden their perspectives, acquire or enhance research skills, or improve teaching skills. In addition, sabbatical leave policies were amended. Any reasonable

amount of time needed for the sabbatical was granted, staff benefits (raises, promotions) could no longer be affected negatively by sabbatical leaves, and using "staffing problems" as an excuse for denying sabbatical leaves as virtually eliminated. The author concluded that these changes greatly improved faculty development polices and enhanced teaching, research, and professional growth among faculty members.

Boice (1987) raised the question, "Is released time an effective component of faculty development programs?" He found that release time for faculty should be questioned as a practice, if not eliminated. The author cited studies that indicated a lack of efficacy of release time, and also indicated that release time for the purposes of doing research may actually be detrimental to teaching, in that it indicates that teaching and research are incompatible. Boice concluded that if the premise for giving faculty release time is to make up for lack of regular time allotted for research, this is a false notion. Faculty surveyed had more than enough free time. If the premise is to make participants more productive during their release time, this notion is unrealistic. The author also felt that skepticism about faculty claims of too little time for research would help correct the problems associated with release time efficacy.

Turner (1988) examined the sabbatical leave question in terms of tax consequences. The author indicated that there have been many types of faculty development opportunities offered by colleges and universities, including educational assistance scholarships, loans, and grants to faculty to pursue an advanced degree. These programs, however, offer very little in terms of tax breaks for faculty to make them more attractive financially. Scholarships and fellowships were excluded from income only to the extent that they were used for tuition and other expenses, and expenses incurred while obtaining an advanced degree are not tax deductible. Income earned while on sabbatical was treated the same as regular salary, and personal expenses incurred by faculty while on sabbatical were non-deductible as well. This review of the IRS tax codes revealed that little relief can be found concerning tax deductions for faculty development programs.

Reynolds (1990) discussed her personal experiences while on sabbatical leave to study cataloging. She found that in planning the sabbatical, certain obstacles, such as possible reduction in library service, undue burden on her colleagues, and possible hierarchical stratification of librarians, were uncovered. However, the author weighed the negatives (increase in stress upon return to job duties, isolation, lack of feedback on research) and the positives (receiving a needed break from the daily routine, being

one's own boss, completing a major project, and broadening personal and professional horizons) and concluded that the benefits outweighed the problems. This realization left her with a new sense of vitality and purpose.

Patrick (1991) wrote about the Spencer fellowships awarded by the National Academy of Education each year to young scholars who wish to improve education in all forms. The awards were deemed very important to educational research, but perhaps more importantly, they offer a unique opportunity for young professors: the chance to take a year off from teaching to do research. Again, this program was unique from normal sabbatical leaves in that it offers non-tenured faculty the opportunity to do research that is important to themselves and their field, and a chance to meet and confer with some of the best and brightest individuals in their profession. This experience can have a crucial, positive effect on a young faculty member's career.

Scott (1992) discussed ways in which sabbatical leaves abroad should be planned and implemented. The author found that attention should be paid to securing the opportunity for international travel, determining the financial situation, getting the sabbatical approved, and clearing away personal and professional barriers. However, planning was seen as only one part of a successful sabbatical. Implementation of the sabbatical must include traveling to the opportunity once found, garnering the necessities of

life, become adjusted to life abroad, and assessing the leave-related implications. The author also discussed some of the problems many faculty faced upon return from an extended sabbatical, including culture shock, possible depression, getting reacquainted with friends, family, and co-workers, and apathy on the part of colleagues toward the sabbatical work. Sabbaticals can be very useful ventures, but careful planning and implementation must be carried out to make them successful.

One important aspect of the sabbatical leave is its internationalization of faculty experiences. Since World War II, higher education has been under increasing pressure to diversify its faculty, and administrators have searched since then to find effective methods to do so. To entice faculty to enhance their experiences by traveling abroad, administrators need to offer incentives. Unfortunately, many faculty are forced to use their sabbatical leave for such endeavors. Restrictions on pay and cuts in external funding, as well as termination of fringe benefits during the leave of absence and loss of tenure evaluations, were all identified as obstacles to international involvement. The study's conclusions was that faculty will only become involved if administration offers recognition and support for their duties by way of merit pay, flexible leave policies, and performance expectations (National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, 1993).

Masawa, Seo, and Kusanagi (1993) reported that sabbatical leave was an important method of teacher training for special education teachers in Japan. In this case, there was no preset time limit for completion before a sabbatical could be granted. The leave was granted to teachers who wish to study, for one year or less, at other universities and learn more about special education. In some cases, the sabbatical can be taken during or immediately after internship training has been completed. With the restrictions lifted, the sabbatical was an important learning tool that was not limited to tenured professors.

Lively (1994) examined some of the problems that can arise from the public's narrow view of sabbatical leaves. An administrator at the University of Colorado announced he was taking a sabbatical to "read Aristotle and Shakespeare and reactivate my sense of scholarship" (p. A16). This comment, when reported to the public, drew great outrage and led to a controversy that aroused suspicion about paid and administrative leaves. The ensuing controversy resulted in a legislator introducing a bill that would regulate sabbaticals and abolish administrative leave. The author noted that although sabbaticals have their critics, most simply wanted assurance that the goals of the sabbatical were being met, and that these paid leaves at public expense were not being used improperly. Still, Lively contended

that even with such assurances, public scrutiny of sabbatical leaves is sure to continue, especially in increasingly difficult financial times.

Carl (1994) also examined a case study where a sabbatical leave turned into a controversy for higher education. In 1991 the then president of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), M. Richard Rose, took a four-month sabbatical to do research for the government. His absence was kept very secret, and an outcry arouse over the lack of information about his whereabouts and purpose of his sabbatical. The Board of Trustees convened and discovered that Rose was in fact doing research for the Central Intelligence Agency. A review panel was formed, and the subsequent investigation forced Rose to retire in 1992. The controversy raised questions about the nature of university involvement in classified government matters. Many felt that RIT should not be involved at all in such research, while others felt that such operations were acceptable as long as full disclosure, a guarantee of personal and civil rights, and an independent overseer were granted.

Sima and Denton (1995) examined the reasons for and products of sabbatical leaves at a public, urban, Carnegie Classified Research I university in the Midwest. The study focused on the university's official policy regarding sabbatical leave and the criteria for selections for approval. The study also identified reasons faculty gave

when applying for sabbatical leave, including to engage in research, to study without interruption, to complete graduate work, to promote curricular and course development, to write professional journal articles or books, to improve artistic performance, and to refresh and renew themselves personally and professionally. According to the study of 193 sabbatical leave applications, faculty intended to use the sabbatical primarily as a tool to conduct research (49%), to write (21%), to develop scholarship and study (12%), to develop research (9%), to learn a new research technique (5%), to conduct reviews, design procedures, or create art work (3%), and to develop courses or curricula (1%). In their post-sabbatical reports, only 18 of 125 faculty reported changes in their activities from expectations. Of those, half wrote more than they intended, and a third made presentations or delivered talks. The authors concluded that sabbaticals were indeed a useful tool for faculty development, in terms of tangible and intangible benefits, for both the faculty member and the university, and that pre- and post-sabbatical reports were an essential component of the sabbatical.

Summary

The literature indicated that the sabbatical was an important part of any faculty development program. Those who took sabbatical leaves overwhelmingly reported the

experience as a positive one and in many cases planned to seek the experience again in the future. However, the need for specific planning and evaluation of sabbatical leave was also indicated, as financial restraints and public awareness have brought increased scrutiny to professional development activities of this nature in higher education.

Discussion

Sabbatical leaves, as demonstrated from the personal narratives, are seen as of tremendous benefit to faculty as they seek self-improvement in areas such as teaching and research. To address motivation, job burn-out, career advancement, and personal satisfaction, those who have taken sabbatical leaves view them as powerful tools for improving their careers. Little mention, however, is directed at the third traditional mission of higher education institutions, service, and what internal benefit to institutional operations a sabbatical leave presents.

Literature firmly supported the contention that sabbaticals serve as a mechanism for conducting research (see Avakian, Reynolds, and Patrick) and to improve or develop teaching (see Dumser, Sullivan, and Masawa, et al). Despite these beliefs, Sima and Denton present a compelling argument that behavior does not typically change after completing a sabbatical. This may, in part, be a major reason that Bluhm, Boice, Lively, and Carl all note concern

over the future and use of sabbaticals. An additional complexity lies in the fiscal concerns of sabbaticals, both to the individual and to the institution.

Future research, then, is compelled to examine both the processes and products of sabbaticals, particularly outcomes of sabbaticals and the benefits to institutions that leaves of this nature may produce. Questions to consider in future scholarship may include: What is the specific benefit to the individual by taking a sabbatical? Does this benefit have a life-span, and if so, how long does it last? What does the institution achieve by granting an entire semester or year off? Does this benefit out-weigh the institutional costs of offering a leave? And, from an administrative standpoint, how can sabbaticals be improved to better benefit the institution, the faculty member, and the institution's service area?

Questions such as these are not all encompassing, but they do provide a basic framework for a further understanding of what a sabbatical leave can and should do. As state legislatures and boards of trustees take more active roles in campus governance, faculty members and administrators who support the sabbatical leave program must become more active in preparing an adequate defense for this method of faculty development.

References

Avakian, A. N. (1987). Planning innovative leave opportunities. Planning for Higher Education, 15(3), 23-28.

Bluhm, H. (1976). The sabbatical leave plan: Is it meeting faculty and institutional needs? College and University Teaching, 24, 207-209.

Boice, R. (1987). Is released time an effective component of faculty development programs? Research in Higher Education, 26, 311-326.

Carl, W. (1994). RIT-CIA case study: Classified research in a university context. Resources in Education, 29(4). (ED 372 700).

Dumser, P. M. (1991). Mini-sabbaticals widen a teacher's world. Educational Leadership, 49, 77-78.

Green, (1994)

Lively, K. (1993). Sabbaticals under fire. Chronicle of Higher Education, 40(25), A16-17.

Masawa, G., Seo, M., & Kusanagi, S. (1993). Teacher education to enhance the qualify of special education in Japan. Peabody Journal of Education, 68(4), 47-59.

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. (1993). Internationalizing higher education through the faculty. Washington, DC: Author.

Patrick, C. L. (1991). Spencer postdoc fellowships give young scholars "a chance to look at taller mountains." Educational Researcher, 20(7), 29-32.

Reynolds, S. J. (1990). Sabbatical: The pause that refreshes. Journal of Academic Librarianship, 16(2), 90-93.

Scott, J. C. (1992). Planning and implementing a sabbatical leave abroad. Journal of Education for Business, 67, 238-242.

Sima, C., & Denton, W. (1995). Reasons for and products of faculty sabbatical leaves. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Orlando, FL.

Stickler, W. H. (1958). Sabbatical leave in the state universities and land-grant institutions, 1957-1958. Higher Education, 14, 118-119.

Sullivan, R. (1972). A sabbatical to teach. Contemporary Education, 44, 44-45.

Turner, M. A. (1988). Tax consequences of faculty leaves for professional development. College Teaching, 36, 149-152.